United Nations S/PV.7000

# Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

*Provisional*

**7000**th meeting
Tuesday, 16 July 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

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| *President*: | Mrs. DiCarlo | (United States of America) |
| *Members*: | Argentina | Mrs. Perceval |
| | Australia | Mr. Quinlan |
| | Azerbaijan | Mr. Sharifov |
| | China | Mr. Wang Min |
| | France | Mr. Araud |
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| | Luxembourg | Ms. Lucas |
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| | Pakistan | Mr. Sahebzada Ahmed Khan |
| | Republic of Korea | Mr. Kim Sook |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Churkin |
| | Rwanda | Mr. Nduhungirehe |
| | Togo | Mr. Kadangha-Bariki |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Sir Mark Lyall Grant |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in the Middle East**

**The President**: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedures, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. Antonio Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Ms. Valerie Amos and Mr. Antonio Guterres, who are participating in today's meeting via video teleconference from Geneva.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Ms. Valerie Amos.

**Ms. Amos**: I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to brief the Council on the regional crisis that has resulted from the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. It is a crisis requiring the sustained and comprehensive engagement of the international community. The security, economic, political, social, development and humanitarian consequences of this crisis are extremely grave, and its human impact immeasurable in terms of the long-term trauma and emotional impact on this and future generations of Syrians. Family and community networks have been destroyed and Syria's reputation for secularism and tolerance has been eroded, with sectarianism on the rise and the long-term consequences of internal displacement and significant refugee flows unknown. We are watching the destruction of not only a country, but also its people.

When I last briefed the Council, I spoke of the impact of this crisis on all Syrians. That remains the case today, with rising levels of unemployment, the currency in free fall, vital infrastructures destroyed, including schools and hospitals, electricity and water supplies disrupted, with damage to physical infrastructure, lack of personnel and limited investment. The World Health Organization (WHO) has repeatedly warned about the heightened risks of communicable disease outbreaks, including waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea, typhoid, cholera and hepatitis. Vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles have reappeared due to a drop in national vaccination coverage. Some 6.8 million Syrians require urgent humanitarian assistance; 4.2 million are internally displaced. Fifty per cent of those requiring assistance are children. Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries now exceed 1.7 million, and High Commissioner Guterres will brief the Council on this in more detail. Of the 525,000 Palestinian refugees hosted in Syria, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East estimates that 420,000 require humanitarian assistance. The most recent assessment of the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations shows 4 million people unable to meet their basic food needs. These statistics hide an unfolding human tragedy.

Despite the worsening security situation, United Nations agencies and partners continue to deliver assistance to people in need. In May, WFP provided assistance to 2.5 million people. The access of 2.4 million people to drinking water has been restored with the support of tUNICEF. Some 1.7 million people have directly benefited from health interventions, and a vaccination campaign run by WHO, UNICEF and the Ministry of Health reached more than 1 million children.

Many of those who have received assistance are in areas under the control of armed opposition groups or in areas of active conflict. In May, 42 per cent of those who received food assistance lived in such areas, and delivery by cross-line interagency convoys continues. Since the end of January, our teams on the ground have reached more than 1.4 million people across conflict lines. These are the most challenging of areas to reach, but also where the needs are greatest.

It is important that recognition be given to the humanitarian work being undertaken inside Syria despite considerable constraints, but that help is insufficient to meet the needs identified. While humanitarian staff work tirelessly to assist affected Syrians, gaps in the response remain considerable. While we know where those considered most vulnerable

are located, humanitarian organizations are still not able to get regular, consistent and unimpeded access to millions of affected people. Some locations remain inaccessible due to active fighting or insecurity, but there are other areas, sometimes only a few kilometres from our offices, including in Damascus and Homs, where we are not granted authorization to enter. For example, despite repeated requests, United Nations agencies continue to be denied access to 25,000 people in Al-Moadamyeh in rural Damascus.

In Al-Qusayr, with the exception of a UNICEF generator that was delivered in the vicinity of the town, the call of the Security Council on the Government of Syria to enable immediate and unhindered humanitarian access was rejected until the fighting had subsided and most inhabitants had fled.

Last month, Government forces launched an offensive in Homs. The old city of Homs has been under siege by Government forces for well over a year. A large number of different armed groups have established positions in the area and are exposing civilians to high risk. An estimated 2,500 civilians are trapped in the old city and have not received any significant humanitarian assistance over the past year. They lack food, have no access to safe drinking water and their health status is deteriorating. Opposition groups have so far not enabled them safe passage to leave, and the Government of Syria has refused to allow agencies to deliver assistance into the old city. All attempts by aid agencies to significantly assist or evacuate civilians from Homs old city have so far failed. United Nations agencies have pre-positioned supplies across Homs city to assist 40,000 people, should the situation deteriorate even further and access to those in need be granted.

We have also seen an escalation of conflict in Aleppo, with reports suggesting that it has been difficult for people to leave the area due to insecurity, combined with a lack of fuel and public transportation. A United Nations cross-line convoy arrived on Sunday, with 15 trucks loaded with vital medicines, non-food items and food. However, these supplies are insufficient to cover deep and ever-growing needs, and many civilians are still trapped in the city. Our team reported a harrowing journey that took four days through some of the most insecure parts of the country.

We are seeing a pattern replicated across Syria — entire neighbourhoods and their inhabitants put at risk, with Government and opposition military positions being established in residential areas. Indiscriminate attacks are repeatedly launched on towns and villages. Parties to the conflict systematically and in many cases deliberately fail in their obligation to protect civilians. Reports indicate open and blatant violations of the rules of war, with total disregard for human life and dignity in a climate of generalized impunity. The parties must be reminded that they will be held accountable for their actions.

I have reported previously to the Council on the bureaucratic procedures imposed by the Government of Syria, which have impeded humanitarian efforts. Partner United Nations agencies report some progress in the issuance of visas, with many agencies receiving visas in shorter time frames. However, others, such as the Department of Safety and Security, continue to face problems. Without sufficient security officers and advisors on the ground, humanitarian partners are restricted in their operations and reach. Lengthy customs procedures still delay the importation and distribution of vital humanitarian goods and equipment.

Two humanitarian hubs have been opened, but there is no progress on the establishment of two additional hubs requested more than a year ago. Implementing capacity remains limited, and there are still only 14 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) allowed to operate in Syria. The number of national NGOs approved to work with United Nations organizations has increased to 69, but problems persist in the number of national NGOs allowed to operate in areas with some of the greatest needs. For example, in Idlib, Dara'a and Al-Raqqa, we are authorized to partner with only three or fewer NGOs.

For the first time in many months, essential surgical medical supplies were allowed into Aleppo. We hope that distribution to all locations will be permitted. The distribution of such items has been restricted across conflict lines and opposition-held areas, in direct violation of international humanitarian law. The growing number of opposition groups also poses serious difficulties in negotiating access in opposition-controlled areas.

United Nations agencies have identified 2.8 million people in the most affected areas who have been difficult to reach with assistance over the past two years, despite their desperate situation. We urgently need to address this. We need a mix of approaches to address the humanitarian challenges that face us in Syria.

We need designated, empowered interlocutors so that agencies can engage with someone with the necessary authority to address constraints — lifting bureaucratic constraints, as already mentioned; the granting of free passage of medical supplies; and the demilitarization of medical facilities. We need prior notification of military offensives to civilians and aide convoys. We need the designation of priority humanitarian routes, including across front lines, to allow the safe passage of convoys. We need the use of humanitarian pauses in fighting in order to allow access to people and, as appropriate, cross-border operations. Crucially, we need the funding to support our work — an additional $3.1 billion to meet the needs of people in Syria and neighbour countries for the rest of this year.

We have all said repeatedly that only a genuine political process can prevent Syria from sliding into deeper fragmentation and chaos. We are looking to the Council to exercise its leadership role in that regard. I should like to conclude by echoing the Secretary-General's call on the parties for a ceasefire during the holy month of Ramadan.

**The President**: I thank Ms. Amos for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Guterres.

**Mr. Guterres**: I thank you very much, Madam, for this opportunity to address the Council again. There are now nearly 1.8 million Syrian refugees known to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the region. Two-thirds of them have fled Syria since the beginning of this year — an average of over 6,000 people a day. We have not seen a refugee outflow escalate at such a frightening rate since the Rwandan genocide almost 20 years ago.

This crisis has been ongoing for much longer than anyone had feared, with unbearable humanitarian consequences. The people of Syria continue to suffer tremendously, and their suffering is now further aggravated by the hot summer temperatures and particularly distressing during this holy month of Ramadan.

Syria's neighbours have allowed huge numbers of refugees to find safety on their soil, saving hundreds of thousands of lives. But their generosity comes at an increasingly heavy price. While Syria continues to drain itself of its people, the prospects for a political solution and an end to the fighting remain poor, and the warning signs of destabilization in some neighbouring countries are troubling. The continuing influx could send them over the edge if the international community does not act more resolutely to help.

In Lebanon, there is now not a single village or town that has not been affected by the presence of more than 600,000 registered Syrian refugees. The country's borders remain open, and thousands of people cross every day. But the conflict in Syria is steadily creeping into Lebanon, with the number of security incidents increasing in Tripoli, the South, and parts of the Bekaa Valley. The country's political system is paralysed and will likely remain so until the Syrian crisis is over.

Elsewhere in the region, access to safety is becoming more difficult for people trying to flee. Sectarian clashes have intensified in Iraq, and the country has shut its borders, slowing arrivals to a trickle. I have been in close contact with the Iraqi authorities and hope to be able to overcome this situation in the near future. Let us not forget that Iraq also currently hosts over 160,000 Syrian refugees.

In Egypt, where UNHCR has registered some 90,000 Syrian refugees, the situation has also deteriorated recently. A number of flights from Syria were turned back last week, following a decision to impose visa requirements and security clearance for Syrians, which are difficult to obtain prior to travel. While I fully understand the challenges Egypt is currently facing, I do hope that the country will continue to extend its traditional hospitality to Syrian refugees, as it has done since the beginning of the conflict.

In Turkey and Jordan, which together host nearly 1 million Syrian refugees, the authorities are now carefully managing the borders with Syria, mainly due to national security concerns. The borders are not closed: refugees continue to cross, but many can do so only in a gradual manner. There is no question that it is imperative for both countries to ensure their own security in an increasingly tense regional environment. However, I hope that the right balance will be found between measures to prevent dangerous infiltrations and the need to ensure that refugees seeking safety — especially families, elderly people, and women with children — are not stranded in precarious conditions or exposed to the risk of getting caught in the fighting.

Beyond the region, I am also concerned about significant gaps in the protection of Syrians in several

European countries that are under much less pressure than Syria's immediate neighbours.

The assertion that the Syria conflict could ignite the whole region is not an empty warning. Measures must be taken now to mitigate the enormous risks of spill-over and to support the stability of Syria's neighbours so as to keep the situation from escalating into a political, security and humanitarian crisis that would move far beyond the international capacity to respond.

The impact of the refugee crisis on the neighbouring countries is crushing, and the recent restrictions on access sound an alarm bell that must not be ignored. It is time to recognize that we cannot go on treating the impact of the Syrian crisis as a simple humanitarian emergency. As the conflict drags on and on, a longer-term approach is needed, focusing on development assistance, especially for those countries and communities that are most seriously affected by the refugee crisis. While Lebanon and Jordan are bearing the heaviest burden, we also should not forget the significant impact that the influx has had on the Kurdish region of Iraq, or the enormous efforts made by Turkey in assisting over 400,000 refugees with hundreds of millions of dollars of its own resources.

I therefore appeal to all development actors — international financial institutions, United Nations agencies, and national and regional development agencies — to cooperate with the concerned Governments in formulating and supporting community development programmes that will assist these States in coping with the impact of the crisis in Syria. Some concrete steps have already been taken by the World Bank, the European Union Commission and several donor countries, but what is needed now is a well-coordinated and comprehensive plan of action to help ease the pressure on the most affected host countries and allow them to continue sheltering refugees. UNHCR, with its extensive presence on the ground, is fully prepared to support such an effort.

I reiterate my call on all States, in the region and further afield, to keep borders open and receive all Syrians who seek protection. But massive international solidarity with the neighbouring countries is central to making this appeal successful. Resettlement and humanitarian admission opportunities can complement this as useful, even if limited measures of burden-sharing.

What I am asking for today is essential to mitigate the risk of an explosion that could engulf the entire Middle East. But only a political solution for Syria, and an end to the fighting, can fully end this risk. I still have not lost hope that the Syrian parties themselves, all others who are directly or indirectly involved in the conflict, and the international community as a whole — which the Council is mandated to represent — will be able to come together and put an end to the bloodshed. We have seen too many conflicts fester for too long and then spread like wildfire. We cannot afford to have that happen with Syria.

**The President**: I thank Mr. Guterres for his briefing. I now give the floor to Mr. Šimonović.

**Mr. Šimonović**: Madam President, I thank you for inviting the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to brief the Security Council on the human rights situation in Syria.

As the Council is aware, the increasingly brutal violence in the country has spread significantly. Just over a month ago, the OHCHR reported that at least 92,901 people had been killed between March 2011 and the end of April 2013. The analysis used involved a rigorous methodology in which each casualty was confirmed by name, place and date of death, with that information being cross-referenced against at least three separate data sources. Out of the 92,901 individuals killed, at least 6,561 were minors, 1,729 of whom were under the age of 10. It has been documented that children have been detained, tortured and executed. They have also been recruited as combatants by armed opposition groups. The independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic has reported that, since March 2011, 86 child combatants have been killed in hostilities. The extremely high rate of killings nowadays, approximately 5,000 a month, demonstrates the drastic deterioration of the conflict.

Since April, Government forces and militias have moved to uproot armed opposition groups from Al-Qusayr and Talkalakh in the Homs governorate, Aleppo, Damascus and rural Damascus. Government forces carry out indiscriminate and disproportionate shelling and aerial bombardments, using, among other weapons, tactical ballistic missiles, cluster and thermobaric bombs — all of which cause extensive damage and casualties if used in densely populated areas. As a result, hundreds of civilians, including women and children, have been killed, thousands injured and tens

of thousands displaced. Many of the displaced in parts of Homs and rural Damascus remain under siege and face miserable humanitarian conditions.

Armed opposition groups have also committed acts of torture, abduction and kidnapping, sometimes along sectarian lines. Killing, violence and threats of reprisals by armed opposition groups against civilian populations perceived to be supportive of the Government are escalating at an alarming rate. Many of the armed opposition groups are reportedly engaging in military operations within populated areas, thereby endangering civilians, including women and children.

The Council has just heard about the humanitarian consequences of the recent intensification of shelling and ground attacks in central Homs. As the shelling continues, it remains difficult to obtain information on casualties, but it is quite clear that we must not allow the suffering, entrapment and death of civilians that we witnessed in Al-Qusayr to be repeated. All parties to the conflict must respect their obligations under international law, avoid civilian casualties and allow trapped civilians to leave without fear of persecution or violence. Immediate humanitarian access should be granted to all conflict-affected populations in besieged areas. We join calls on States to maintain an open-border policy for refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict. We should not wait to encourage humanitarian negotiations between the two sides to alleviate the most acute suffering. Humanitarian contacts are not only vital in their own right; they can also sow the seeds for political negotiations in the longer run.

In Syria today, serious human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity are the rule. In its latest report, the commission of inquiry notes that a number of incidents, potentially amounting to massacres, took place between January and May. OHCHR has received personal accounts of survivors of massacres by Government forces and affiliated militias which took place between 2 and 3 May in the village of Al-Bayda and the Baniyas neighbourhood of Ras Al-Nabaa, both of which are in the governorate of Tartus. According to survivors interviewed by the OHCHR, the massacre in Al-Bayda resulted in at least 200 deaths, including entire families, women and children, some of whom appeared to have been mutilated and burned. In Ras Al-Nabaa, residents trying to flee under intense shelling before the massacre took place were reportedly intercepted at Government checkpoints and forced to return, in some cases to meet their deaths.

OCHCR continues to investigate equally disturbing allegations of killings along sectarian lines reportedly carried out by armed opposition groups. Large-scale displacement, including across the border, on the basis of religious or other affiliations, is a worrying indication that intercommunal massacres are now a real risk. OCHCR is concerned at the use of rhetoric by religious and political leaders in Syria and the region that can exacerbate existing sectarian tensions and lead to more violence and large-scale atrocities. All leaders have a responsibility to refrain from using or condoning language that may escalate sectarian tension. States must take action to prevent incitement to violence on any grounds.

The continuous influx of foreign fighters into Syria to support both sides remains of great concern and fuels the conflict further. The return of foreign fighters in body bags is exacerbating sectarian tension in surrounding States and endangering the security of the region. States should discourage the movement of foreign fighters into Syria.

The supply of weapons to both sides must stop. The solution should be political, not military. States with influence over the parties must work to support an inclusive, Syrian-led political solution to the conflict.

Parties must initiate immediate negotiations to reduce violence and human rights violations and improve the protection of civilians. Progress in those areas can build confidence between the Government, armed opposition groups and local communities and open the political dialogue.

We fully support the Secretary-General's call for a truce during Ramadan and call on all parties to lay down their arms, immediately cease acts of violence against civilians and protect them from hostilities, in compliance with international law.

Throughout continuing efforts to bring peace, we should seek to uphold justice and accountability. War crimes, crimes against humanity and gross human rights violations must not go unpunished. To that end, OHCHR once again urges the Security Council to refer the Syrian crisis to the International Criminal Court.

We urge the Syrian Government to facilitate access for OHCHR, top officials and staff and the independent international commission of inquiry on Syria to the country. We ask the Security Council for its support in that regard. Through fact-finding and human

rights monitoring, those teams can provide impartial substantive analysis to support the protection of human rights and provide for high-level advocacy.

**The President**: I thank Mr. Šimonović for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, Madam President, to begin by congratulating you on your country's presidency of the Security Council this month. I would also like to thank the speakers who have briefed us this morning.

The Syrian Government continues to do everything possible to shoulder its responsibility and duty towards its people in order to meet the humanitarian and basic needs of its citizens. It is doing so in spite of economic, political and media pressure, including of course the arbitrary unilateral economic measures that have been imposed against the Syrian people by some States Members of this international Organization. That is in addition to the pressure exerted against the Syrian economy and the manipulation of our national currency, as well as the continued support being provided to armed terrorist groups entering Syria across our borders from neighbouring countries in order to undertake acts of destruction, terrorism and violence and to obliterate every means of survival for Syrian citizens, including our infrastructure, crops and ability to provide humanitarian assistance.

The Syrian Government participated seriously and effectively in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the fifth humanitarian support plan. It has also continued its constructive cooperation with the United Nations system to address the humanitarian consequences of the events in a positive and pragmatic manner. We welcome the extension of the objectives under the assistance plan, including projects aimed at supporting the Syrian Government in revitalizing key sectors and to rebuild our infrastructure, which has been systematically targeted by armed terrorist groups.

Allow me now to turn to some of the steps taken by the Syrian Government since the previous briefing to the Council (see S/PV.6949).

In an attempt to coordinate our national and international efforts to provide comprehensive international assistance to all those who deserve it, the competent authorities of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic have established a high commission on assistance made up of national committees. Its purpose is to ensure the return of displaced families to their homes or to provide them with temporary housing in order to meet their basic needs and provide them with the necessary financial assistance. As of 17 June, the Government of Syria had set up approximately 803 temporary housing units throughout the country. Those include community centres, schools and governmental buildings. There are now approximately 918,000 displaced families throughout Syrian territory.

In addition, there is also a governmental committee in place to address reconstruction issues and serve those whose properties have been destroyed. That committee also helps to rehabilitate and maintain infrastructure and several Government buildings.

The Government has also taken steps to facilitate the work of United Nations agencies in providing relief by increasing the number of non-governmental organizations to 14. That is in addition to the 82 national groups working throughout the country.

We have also allowed international organizations to carry out approximately 800 visits to evaluate needs and provide assistance. Three hubs have been established, and the Government is considering the opening of additional ones. That is in addition to the work being carried out by the World Food Programme.

The cooperation of the Syrian Government with the United Nations is governed by the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 46/182, including the Guiding Principles for Humanitarian Assistance and the revised humanitarian relief plan. The Government is fully committed to working within that framework. However, at the same time, the Government is calling upon the Secretariat and the Member States to show the same level of respect for the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Dealing with civilians should not be done in a selective, opportunistic or politicized manner. Statements to the effect that there are approximately 2,500 persons trapped in Homs, when the Syrian Government is ensuring their security and that they have access to assistance, as well as doing everything possible to open up the area and clear it of terrorist actions, should not divert our attention from the blockade that has been imposed by armed terrorist

groups against hundreds of thousands of Syria's inhabitants. We have not heard any comment from the United Nations on that issue.

With regard to the humanitarian tragedy caused by armed terrorist groups and their supporters, including States Members of the Organization, I should like to mention the towns of Nebbol and Al-Zahraa, which have been under blockade for more than a year by such groups crossing into our territory from Turkey. The 2 million citizens of Aleppo, who suffer from terror imposed by extremist terrorist groups known to everyone through social media, including Al-Qaida — do they not also deserve a mention by the Secretary-General? Do the citizens of Nebbol and Al-Zahraa not deserve even a limited response from the United Nations in order to break the blockade? Interest has been shown with regard to the thousands of people living in Homs, while hundreds of thousands of others in northern Syria are ignored.

Returning to Homs, the Government of Syria has extended a formal invitation to the International Committee of the Red Cross to provide emergency relief, in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, to help people under blockade in the old city, who are being used by armed terrorist groups.

Some in the United Nations justify their determination to provide humanitarian relief across international borders by asserting that the Government has not provided assistance to all regions. However, the figures speak for themselves. The statistics of the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross speak for themselves. Sixty per cent of assistance is being channelled to regions where the armed terrorist groups are operating, while only 40 per cent is being sent to other regions.

A report dated 23 May by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees referred to 14 joint United Nations convoys gaining access to hot spots that were not previously accessible in Aleppo, Idlib, Homs and Dayr Al-Zour, in order to provide assistance to approximately 975,000 persons. The World Food Programme is also providing assistance in Nashabiya, Al-Moadamyeh and Duma, in the vicinity of Damascus, as well as in Al-Mayadin district of Dayr Al-Zour. According to United Nations sources, during the first half of the year, 10 convoys were deployed to assist approximately 1 million inhabitants, including in A'zaz, Akramah, Bab Al-Hawa and Atma, along the Turkish border, as well as Talbisah, in Homs and Sarmin in the governorate of Idlib.

The lack of financing continues to be the major obstacle to implementing the relief plan. We are surprised that, following the largest humanitarian appeal launched by United Nations agencies and their partners in recent times, financing has to date reached only 35 per cent of the amount required for the implementation of the relief plan. According to a report by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, if financing is not received in time, the basic relief needed for survival will be jeopardized by the beginning of September.

Displaced Syrians continue to return to their homes on a regular basis, in particular refugees in neighbouring States. In that connection, I should like to refer to some statistics documented by the United Nations and its agencies. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has reported the voluntary return of thousands of Syrians from Iraq, Jordan and Turkey. Sixty-eight thousand persons have returned to Syria, 9,000 arriving in the month of June alone, mostly from the Zaatari refugee camp. Forty-five thousand Syrians have returned from Turkey, while 9,000 have come back from Iraq. We regret the fact that some Governments have seized Syrians' identification documents to prevent them from returning to their country. Worse still, those people have been intimidated and dissuaded from returning voluntarily to their homes.

The diplomatic-political-media machine gives us unreliable and fabricated statistics and information as to the number of dead, refugees and prisoners in Syria. Those statistics come from unprofessional sources. Moreover, an American company has been officially entrusted with preparing the statistics, in spite of the fact that it is associated with a State whose hostility towards Syria is well known. Such institutions are not interested in knowing where each refugee or person killed came from, or whether they were from the Syria Arab Army or the police force.

Our army faces unprecedented terrorism from extremist groups that have come from all four corners of the Earth to destroy Syria and kill Syrians. This is a historic moment that requires the courage to recognize the reality we face and to stand against the international

terrorism confronting Syria, which is undermining all international efforts to combat terrorism.

We are seeing a new face of terrorism that is quite different. Some call it a jihad, others call it an armed struggle and others still call it sexual jihad. This is transnational terrorism and it has a negative impact on everyone. That is well known to the States Members of the Organization. Opposition forces today stated that the Al-Nusra Front, which is linked to Al-Qaida, intends to declare an Islamic Syrian State in the north of the country by the end of the month of Ramadan. Those terrorists, who come from abroad via our border with Turkey, have Takfiri and Salafist tendencies. They are jihadists and are sponsored by Governments hostile to Syria, which finance terrorism that is killing only Syrians. However, as has already been the case for some States, that terrorism will reach the doors of those who sponsor it. If Member States do not recognize the dangers of that type of terrorism, then there will not be peace for anyone and the day will come when the Governments of some Member States will regret their actions against the Syrian people from a social, economic and infrastructure standpoint.

We are fighting Salafist terrorism on behalf of the entire world. Others have had to do the same in Afghanistan, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. That is the terrorism we face today in Syria. It is not dissociated from the terrorism that all Members face. Lybian weapons arrive through official convoys, aeroplanes and ships to neighbouring States Members of the Organization. Some say that there are 2,500 individuals in Homs whom the Security Council needs to intervene to save. In fact, hundreds of thousands of Syrians are suffering from terrorism. That is today's reality.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

**Mr. Salam** (Lebanon): Allow me first to commend Ms. Amos, Mr. Guterres and Mr. Šimonović for their relentless efforts to help alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people and to ensure respect for their basic rights. I would also like to thank them for their briefings, which only confirm how appalling the humanitarian situation has become and how urgent remains the need for the Council to act.

It is indeed tragic that, since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, more than 100,000 people have died and many more have been wounded. Almost 4 million have been displaced within Syria and another 2 million have fled, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, including my own, Lebanon. But it is even more tragic that the Security Council, the organ entrusted by the Charter of the United Nations with the maintenance of peace and security, has so far failed to put an end to the conflict, while every day brings more victims and greater destruction.

Time and again we and others have warned against the potential spillover of the Syrian conflict into neighbouring countries. With the failure to end the conflict, the potential dangers are now unfortunately becoming realities. The increasing cross-border fire and incursions from Syria into Lebanon are threatening my country's security and stability. We strongly condemn all such acts, whoever their perpetrators may be and whatever their alleged reasons. We appreciate the fact that the presidential statement issued by the Council on 11 July

> "echoes President Michel Sleiman's protest, in his letter of 18 June 2013, at such repeated shelling from the conflicting parties, including the Syrian Arab Armed Forces and Syrian armed opposition groups, that violates Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity." (*S/PRST/2013/9*)

In that context, let me reiterate that my Government remains fully committed to its policy of dissociation from the Syrian conflict and to the terms of the Baabda Declaration of 12 June 2012.

Another dramatic impact of the Syrian conflict is the massive influx into Lebanon of refugees fleeing violence in Syria. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the latest statistics indicate that there are now 607,908 refugees, as compared to 129,106 at the end of 2012 and 28,477 in mid-July 2012. In other words, the number of refugees has increased by more than 460 per cent since the beginning of this year, and by more than 20-fold in a year. In reality, the numbers are much greater. The Lebanese General Security Directorate puts the number of Syrians in Lebanon at 1.2 million. The discrepancy between the figures is due to the fact that many Syrians have not felt the need to register as refugees, or are unwilling or afraid to do so for political or sectarian reasons; on top of that are illegal entrants and the 200,000 to 300,000 Syrian workers traditionally present in Lebanon, along with the family members who have joined them since the situation began worsening in

Syria. In addition, there are about 40,000 Lebanese returnees and 63,000 Palestinian refugees who have fled Syria since the crisis began.

Syrian refugees are now to be found in more than 1,400 locations in Lebanon, and their numbers exceed those of local inhabitants in 30 per cent of those places. It is also noteworthy that approximately 77 per cent of those refugees are women and children, and that 66 per cent are in northern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley, which are the regions closest to the Syrian border and also happen to be the poorest areas of my country. Amid the continued violence in Syria, the number of refugees and other persons displaced to Lebanon is projected to reach 1,229,000 by the end of 2013 — the equivalent of more than a fourth of Lebanon's own population — putting significant pressure on local communities. Madam President, it is as if your country, the United States of America, were to have an influx of 75 million refugees, which is more than twice the population of Canada. Can you imagine the impact of an influx of such magnitude on your own country?

In its spring 2013 *Lebanon Economic Monitor*, the World Bank noted that the Syrian conflict

> "is severely and negatively impacting the Lebanese economy. The largest impact arises through the insecurity and uncertainty spillovers and touches at the heart of Lebanon's societal fabric."

In fact, in 2012 consumer confidence reached a new low, plunging by 36.8 percent as compared to 2011. As security incidents have continued to increase in 2013, we expect a further drop in consumer confidence, leading to slowed economic activity. Faced with uncertainty, private investment has also declined. Inflationary pressures are mounting. Trade activities have been widely affected by the Syrian crisis, since traditional land transit routes through Syria have been severely disrupted, when not closed altogether, and insurance and freight costs have risen significantly. For example, between January and April of this year, cumulative exports through Syria dropped by 20 per cent. The tourism sector witnessed double-digit declines during 2011 and 2012, and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia predicts an even larger decline in 2013, by around 25 per cent. Since tourism represents between 10 and 12 per cent of our gross domestic product (GDP), the impact of such a decline could lead to a 2.5 per cent drop in GDP from tourism alone.

The Syrian refugee crisis also has broader implications for stability in Lebanon, and it has put significant pressure on local resources, leading to increases in security threats, the crime rate, social tensions and labour competition, since approximately 1.4 million Lebanese citizens are thought to be affected by the displacements from Syria. Beyond the fiscal cost, the influx of refugees has also strained public services in areas such as health and education.

The pressures and threats on Lebanon are mounting and the escalating needs of the Syrian refugees have clearly outstripped my country's capacity. Yet, well aware of its humanitarian responsibilities and legal obligations, and in view of the historical and brotherly ties between the Lebanese and Syrian peoples, Lebanon reiterates before the Council today that it will not close its borders to those fleeing the horrors of violence and destruction. It will not extradite refugees who have sought safety on its territory. It will not stop delivering basic humanitarian assistance to any refugee as long as the means are available. However, Lebanon also believes that it is its right to ask every member of the international community to share with it the burdens of the Syrian refugee crisis, whether in terms of numbers or assistance — especially considering that Lebanon is the smallest of the host countries with the largest number of refugees, both in absolute terms and relative to its own population.

Clearly, Lebanon cannot cope by itself with the immense tasks that lie ahead, as the number of refugees spirals. For a comprehensive and coordinated response to the current crisis, $1.7 billion is needed to fund Lebanon's part of the fifth Syria regional response plan, which covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2013. Direct support to the Government of Lebanon for strengthening its national capacities and essential public services is crucial. No less vital is the need to secure direct funds to meet the needs of Lebanese host communities in assisting refugees.

The Kuwait conference was a successful start and pledges have been generous, but we all need to ensure that pledges do not remain mere pledges and that all donors make good on them. Undoubtedly, an increase in the humanitarian assistance to the people of Syria is a matter of paramount urgency.

Let me conclude, however, by quoting from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's appeal for the people

of Syria, issued on the occasion of the beginning of this holy month of Ramadan:

> "[N]o matter how effective our humanitarian response, it will not end the violence. The solution to the problems of Syria does not lie there: what is needed is a peaceful Syrian-led political solution for a democratic future in which all Syrians live in security, equality and dignity" (*SG/SM/15162*).

I sincerely hope that the Council will live up to its responsibilities in helping to make such a solution possible.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

**Mr. Alhakim** (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Madam President, and to congratulate the United States of America upon its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would like to express my appreciation to the representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Sir Mark Lyall Grant, who presided over the Council last month.

In the light of the humanitarian situation faced by our brothers the Syrian people, and as an imperative humanitarian duty, the Iraqi Government has taken a number of measures to alleviate the suffering experienced by our brothers in Syria. In recognition of how the Syrian people hosted a great number of Iraqi refugees during the crisis our country faced, the Iraqi Government contributed $10 million at the international donors conference on Syria held in Kuwait, and established a $40-million fund to assist Syrians. Furthermore, the Government is providing monthly grants of $400 to families and of $150 to unmarried individuals. We note that Iraq provides this financial assistance without requesting any compensation from the international community.

The Iraqi Government is also providing social services to its Syrian guests by opening its school doors to all Syrian boys and girls, at all levels, so that they can continue their education without interruption. Iraq is also providing medical services at Government hospitals unconditionally. Furthermore, those Syrians who are financially capable are given the freedom to choose where they want to settle within Iraq. We have also extended an invitation to the Secretary-General and his representatives for humanitarian affairs to visit Iraq and inspect the conditions of the Syrian refugees. We take this opportunity to recall the assistance provided by the Iraqi Government in facilitating the successful visit of Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts, and her team to inspect the conditions of Syrian children in Iraq.

With regard to the security and political situations, the position of the Iraqi Government since the early days of the crisis has been one of support for a peaceful resolution of the crisis by the Syrians themselves coming to the negotiating table to stop the spilling of Syrian blood. We have provided clear support for the efforts of the United Nations, including those of the Special Envoys of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi and Mr. Kofi Annan. We voiced our support for the six-point solution proposed by Mr. Kofi Annan to resolve the crisis in Syria.

Here we reaffirm our position that Iraq does not support any military or foreign intervention. We call on all sides, Arab and non-Arab alike, to cease providing financial and military support to all militias and Islamic militant groups, which we believe can only further complicate matters.

In the light of Iraq's support for the resolution of the crisis, my Government has been a keen participant in the conferences that we believe may help all sides to reach a viable solution to stop the conflict, whose negative effects on the region and on Iraq in particular are quite clear. My Government has made its position very clear in meetings held with the moderate Syrian opposition, which is seeking a peaceful solution and working to establish a democratic constitutional system that satisfies the demands and aspirations of the Syrian people.

The Iraqi Government urges the Syrian Government to provide access for international organizations to reach civilians trapped in conflict areas so as to provide them with food, medical services and basic necessities. Furthermore, Iraq is concerned over reports of the use of chemical weapons in the conflict, in particular in the light of the fact that the Iraqi people have suffered from the use of such internationally banned weapons.

In conclusion, the solution of the Syrian crisis lies with those Syrians who truly want a peaceful settlement that would provide for a prosperous future for all sectors of Syrian society, living in peace and security. My Government has supported and continues to support the convening of a second Geneva conference to consider

ways and means to find a solution acceptable to all parties to the conflict.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

**Mr. Eler** (Turkey): At the outset, allow me to thank you, Madam, for organizing this very timely briefing. Our thanks also go to Ms. Amos, Mr. Guterres and Mr. Šimonović for their valuable updates on the intensifying humanitarian crisis in Syria.

Today's briefing serves as another reminder that the grave humanitarian situation in Syria is unacceptable and unsustainable. How many more wake-up calls are necessary for the international community to effectively address this crisis?

The Syrian regime, which tried to suppress the legitimate demands of its people through the indiscriminate use of violence and then declared an all-out war against them by employing heavy weaponry, has been escalating its inhumane attacks with every day that passes. Al-Qusayr, Hama and Homs are under the regime's heavy bombardment from both ground and air. The use of ballistic missiles and chemical weapons against the civilian population further increases our concern and indignation and is turning the situation into the greatest humanitarian tragedy of the twenty-first century. Unless those attacks come to an end and foreign militia forces fighting on the side of the regime leave the country, it will not be possible to clear the way for a peaceful settlement.

The bloodshed must come to an end through a political solution and a meaningful transition, while the territorial integrity and political unity of Syria is preserved. The international community, in particular the United Nations, has a vital role to play in that regard. On the other hand, we should address the current humanitarian crisis in a realistic and results-oriented manner in order to extend a helping hand to the civilian victims of this disaster.

As we just heard, recent reports of the United Nations and its agencies operating on the ground portray a troublesome picture. I will not repeat the numbers, which speak for themselves.

When we look at the situation from the Turkish side of the border, we see a crisis that threatens regional and international peace and security and that places a grave burden on Syria's neighbours. The neighbouring countries cannot, and should not, be asked to face those pressing challenges alone.

We in Turkey are exerting our utmost efforts to respond the ramifications of the Syrian crisis. Our assistance is based on the principles of responsibility and conscience. I would like to stress that, despite its ever-increasing burden, Turkey will continue to stand by the Syrian people, and its open-door policy for Syrians will continue.

We now host more than 200,000 Syrians in 20 camps. The number exceeds half a million if we include those who have found their way to various Turkish cities and towns. Besides keeping its borders open, Turkey also provides appropriate living conditions to Syrians in the camps in all areas pertaining to daily life, such as health, education and social needs. Turkish expenses arising from the responsibility to respond to the crisis have exceeded $1.5 billion. Furthermore, the Turkish Red Crescent Society is delivering humanitarian relief at the zero point of the border with Syria with transparency and in conformity with international legitimacy and humanitarian principles.

As highlighted by the United Nations, humanitarian funding falls short of keeping up with the needs in Syria. However, pledging financial support alone is not sufficient. The existing methodology aimed at achieving full, unimpeded and safe humanitarian access is not working amid the growing and deepening crisis in Syria. The international community, with a view to burden-sharing, must take collective action. As a response to the growing tragedy and the plight of the Syrian people, new and creative measures and methods are needed in order to ensure safe and sustained humanitarian access to address the problems of internally displaced persons within Syria. The Council needs to consider alternative forms of aid delivery, including cross-border operations.

The international community, in particular the Security Council, has a moral responsibility to act urgently, resolutely and collectively. In its absence, this untenable situation, which is destroying human lives, damaging livelihoods and threatening regional and international peace and security, will continue to grow.

We reiterate once again our support for the Syrian people's legitimate aspirations to live in dignity, as well as our determination to continue to do our utmost in responding to the humanitarian crisis across our border.

**The President**: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

*The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.*